

## **Wine column for March 2008**

For my tour around the world of wine, I have chosen Chile because there are very likeable wines and also affordable after all.

Chile is the country which saved a great deal of Grape varieties in the early 1900, It is one of the only wine producing country which was not exposed to the Phylloxera ( A kind of disease that feeds on the rootstocks and leaves of Vitis Vinefera Vines. It caused devastating damage to vineyard in the late nineteenth Century which killed the vines in Europe), So Chilean vines are possibly some of the oldest in the world. We could say Chile is the oldest wine Producer from the new world.

Beware of some the cheap Chilean wines and concentrate on the quality as it will really show what fantastic wines Chile can produce.

Chile is divided in three regions. Northern, Central and Southern area, the best terroir are in the central area (from Casablanca to Maipo and Maule to Colchagua Valley and Curico Valley, in those regions the grapes varieties are Sauvignon blanc, Chardonnay and some Gewurztraminer and Viognier and for the red, Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Malbec, Carmenere, Syrah and some Pinot Noir.

Chilean wines shot to fame when Pioneer wine maker Miguel Torres from Catalonia in Spain bought some land in central area then planted vines back in 1972, his philosophy was purely based on the climate and the soil.

Merlot is the benchmark of wines in Chile, along with some superb Sauvignon Blanc and distinctive Chardonnays .

What you will find in the Merlot grape is a deep ruby red in colour, ripe plum fig and cinnamon, in the mouth a complex note of spices, dark chocolate with a hint of vanilla, soft tannins resulting in a long finish., as for the sauvignon blanc, there are fruit driven, tropical fruit notes like lychees and pineapple, in the mouth quite flinty with mineral note, and for the chardonnay I suggest the Reserve chardonnays which have a toasty finish to it as there mostly mature in new oak barrel. Some of the best wines are produced by Casa Lapostolle, Miguel Torres, Viña Montgras. Viña Errazuriz and Valdivieso.

January is also a good month for wine bargains, so just take a look at what's on offer as more region open their treasures to the world, there is a wide choice and you will find delicious wine to suit any budget. So stock up now and enjoy later...

As I will go from one country to the next, for those who want to start a wine collection, these are few steps to follow.

- 1) few bottles of each is enough, you don't need cases to be a collector (but always get 2 bottles, just in case one is corked or simply if you enjoy the first bottle too much...)
- 2) The wines you want to keep should be stored in a dark place, with cool temperature.
- 3) When your collection is growing, consider a listing for the type of wine, vintage, year of purchase, Prices and when you should drink it. (ask for advice when Buying).

My wine selection:

Sauvignon Blanc, Santa Digna 2006 Miguel Torres @£6.99 (thesecretcellar .co.uk)  
Merlot Vina Montgras 2005 @£5.50 (hic-winemerchants.com)  
Errazuriz, wild ferment Chardonnay 2005, Casablanca Valley @ £10.75 (bbr.com)

Xavier Le-Bellego  
Forbury's restaurant